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SUBJECT: SURINAME: 2006-2007 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR) PART I, DRUGS AND CHEMICAL
CONTROL

REF: STATE 249035

PARAMARIBO 00000723 001.2 OF 004

[1](#)1. Post presents its 2006 INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT (INCSR), Part I, Drugs and Chemical
Control.

Suriname

[1](#)I. Summary

Suriname is a transit point for South American cocaine en route to Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States, and has been a transit country for MDMA (ecstasy) from Europe to the U.S. market in the past. The Government of Suriname's (GOS) inability to control its borders, lack of a law enforcement presence in the interior, and lack of aircraft or patrol boats allow traffickers to move drug shipments via sea, river, and air with little resistance. Nevertheless, in 2006, GOS law enforcement continued its strong anti-narcotics performance, once again demonstrating the capacity to arrest and convict high-profile narco-traffickers. The principal obstacles to effective narcotics law enforcement efforts are inadequate resources and limited training for law enforcement. Suriname is a party to the 1988 United Nations Drug Convention but has not implemented legislation to bring itself into full conformity with the Convention. However, in October 2006, the country hosted an international anti-narcotics conference showing its commitment to combat drug trafficking.

II. Status of Country

Suriname is a transshipment point for cocaine destined primarily for Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States. Evidence available in 2006 did not indicate that a significant amount of drugs entered the U.S. from Suriname. The GOS is unable to detect the diversion of precursor chemicals for drug production, as it has no legislation controlling precursor chemicals and hence no tracking system to monitor them. The lack of resources, limited law enforcement capabilities, inadequate legislation, drug-related corruption, a complicated and time-consuming bureaucracy, and overburdened and under-resourced courts inhibit GOS ability to identify, apprehend, and prosecute narcotic traffickers. In addition, sparsely populated parts of its coastal region and the country's isolated jungle interior, together with weak border controls and infrastructure, make narcotics detection and

interdiction efforts difficult. However, the Ministry of Justice and Police and law enforcement institutions in Suriname are increasingly more active and effective in pro-actively targeting large trafficking rings and working with international partners.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2006

Policy Initiatives. Senior GOS officials and GOS law enforcement officials consistently express concern regarding the extent of drugs transiting Suriname - as do the media and the citizenry - and point to the lack of resources as the primary obstacle to Suriname's counternarcotics efforts. Resources can be interpreted as financial as well as the lack of trained personnel. Suriname's National Drugs Master Plan (2006-2010) was approved in January 2006. The plan covers both supply and demand reduction and includes calls for new legislation to control precursor chemicals. The development of the plan through multi-sectoral consultation was a significant step in fostering national coordination to address Suriname's drug problem. To coordinate implementation of the Master Plan, the Executive Office of the National Anti-Drug Council was established.

Law Enforcement Efforts. In 2006, Surinamese law enforcement continued to focus attention on dismantling large criminal organizations and reflected an increased capacity to arrest and secure convictions of well-connected narcotics traffickers. In 2006, GOS law enforcement agencies arrested numerous people carrying drugs on or in their bodies or in their luggage at the international airport, primarily passengers on the three to six weekly flights (varying seasonally) to Amsterdam; through September, 112 of those arrested had ingested cocaine. Many who evade detection in Suriname are arrested at the airport in Amsterdam, which since 2004 has implemented a 100 percent inspection of all passengers and baggage arriving on all inbound flights from Suriname.

In a major success in 2006, Surinamese authorities arrested Shaheed "Roger" Khan, a Guyanese national suspected of narcotics

PARAMARIBO 00000723 002.2 OF 004

trafficking, on charges of false documentation. He was set to return to Guyana via Trinidad and Tobago, and while en route was turned over to Drug Enforcement Administration officials from the United States in Port of Spain after being denied entry to Trinidad and Tobago by Trinidadian officials. Khan was then brought to the United States, where he is currently awaiting trial for trafficking narcotics into the U.S.

A special Surinamese police unit, the Special Investigative Team (BOT) continued to cooperate closely with Dutch law enforcement authorities and investigated numerous criminal organizations smuggling drugs and laundering money between Suriname and the Netherlands. The cooperation culminated in the investigation and arrest of two long-suspected, major drug traffickers and several of their associates during an operation named "Ficus." In December 2005, one trafficker was sentenced by a Dutch court to ten years imprisonment for drug trafficking, money laundering and fraud. Another high profile suspect arrested during "Operation Ficus" is still on trial in Suriname. He owns a prominent rice export business in Suriname and was arrested in connection with the December 2003 confiscation of 296 kilograms of cocaine from one of his vessels that was en route to Portugal, and for being a suspected member of a criminal organization.

In February and March 2006, Surinamese law enforcement officials destroyed major marijuana fields in the interior, consisting of four and two hectares, respectively. In March a joint operation of police in the two western districts, Nickerie and Coronie, led to the arrest of two men in connection with the seizure of 100 kilograms of cocaine hidden in a Texaco oil-storage tank. In June 2006, Police seized 215 kilograms of cocaine in batches of 104 and 109 kilograms respectively at two separate residences in Paramaribo. Six Surinamers and five Guyanese were arrested at the scene; one of the Guyanese later proved to be Roger Khan and three to be ex-policemen.

In August 2006, a joint operation of the police "Arrest Team" (A-Team) and the Narcotics Brigade led to the arrest of three men, among them a relative of former military strongman Desi Bouterse. Also in 2006, police confiscated 95 kilograms of cocaine from two

residences in Paramaribo. The BOT is currently investigating a possible money laundering link in this case. Bank accounts of those involved in the case have been frozen.

There are criminal organizations operating arms-for-drugs activities in Suriname that have connections to the Colombian terrorist group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

In 2006, the judiciary handed down several stiff sentences in other high-profile drug cases. In March, a judge convicted and sentenced two men to eight and four years imprisonment, respectively, based on the April 2005 seizure of 118 kilograms of cocaine. The cocaine was hidden in a container of lumber, which was shipped to France. French authorities followed the shipment to the Netherlands via Belgium. In July, three men were convicted and sentenced to nine, six, and five years imprisonment, respectively, for trafficking 215 kilograms of cocaine that were seized by a joint unit of the Surinamese police and army in a boat on a creek near the Saramacca River, in the northwestern quadrant of Suriname. In January, two men received sentences of six and two and a half years in connection with the April 2005 seizure of 335 kilograms of cocaine, four hand grenades, and live ammunition.

Through September 2006 the GOS seized 577 kilograms of cocaine and 42 kilograms of cannabis. A total of 571 people were arrested for drug-related offenses. Seizures and arrests have significantly decreased compared to those of 2005; law enforcement sources attribute this to the GOS' focus on combating narcotics: within the past five years GOS law enforcement has rounded up eight of the ten known major criminal organizations operating in the country.

Corruption. The GOS does not facilitate the production, processing, or shipment of narcotic and psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, and does not discourage the investigation or prosecution of such acts. Moreover, the GOS has demonstrated some willingness to undertake law enforcement and legal measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and punish public corruption. Public corruption is considered a problem in Suriname and there are reports of drug use and drug sales in prisons. During 2006 the GOS arrested police officers suspected of involvement in trafficking narcotics and membership in criminal organizations, including five in May 2006. Reports of money laundering, drug trafficking, and associated

PARAMARIBO 00000723 003.2 OF 004

criminal activity involving current and former government and military officials continue to circulate, but the government has a track record of prosecuting or terminating corrupt officials. According to Customs reports, the GOS loses roughly \$45 million annually in uncollected Customs revenues due to corruption and false invoicing. Investigations show that false invoicing occurs daily, despite heavy fines. Former military strongman Desi Bouterse and former rebel leader Ronnie Brunswijk, who have both served in the National Assembly since 2005, have been convicted in absentia in the Netherlands for narcotics trafficking. Brunswijk was also convicted in a French court in absentia for the same crime.

Agreements and Treaties. Suriname is party to the 1961 United Nations Single Convention as amended by the 1972 Protocol, and the 1971 U.N. Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Suriname is also a party to the 1988 U.N. Drug Convention and has accordingly passed legislation that conforms to a majority of the convention's articles, but it has failed to pass legislation complying with precursor chemical control provisions. The GOS ratified the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters. Since 1976, the GOS has been sharing narcotics information with the Netherlands pursuant to a Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement. In August 1999, a comprehensive six-part, bilateral, maritime counter-narcotics enforcement agreement with the U.S. entered into force. The U.S.-Netherlands Extradition Treaty of 1904 is applicable to Suriname, but Suriname's Constitution prohibits the extradition of its nationals. Therefore the extradition relationship between the United States and Suriname is inactive, but it was a topic of discussion in July when the United States requested Khan's extradition. In January 2006 Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement allowing for direct law enforcement and judicial cooperation between the

countries, thereby no longer requiring the process to be first routed through The Hague. Parties met in October to discuss progress in implementing the agreement, which covers cooperation with regard to drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, and organized crime. Suriname has also signed bilateral agreements to combat drug trafficking with neighboring countries Brazil and Guyana, as well as with Venezuela. Suriname is an active member of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS/CICAD), to which it reports regularly. In October 2006, Suriname hosted an anti-narcotics conference attended by many regional and international players, including the United States. The "Paramaribo Declaration," which was endorsed in principle by the participants at the end of the conference, proposes a framework to establish an intelligence-sharing network, coordinate and execute sting operations, and tackle money laundering. Suriname has signed agreements with the United States, Netherlands and France which allow for police attaches to work with local police. Suriname is not a party to the U.N. Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Cultivation and Production. Suriname is not a producer of cocaine or opium poppy. While cannabis is cultivated in Suriname, there is little specific data on the number of hectares under cultivation, or evidence that it is exported in significant quantities.

Drug Flow/Transit. Much of the cocaine entering Suriname is delivered by small aircraft, which land on clandestine airstrips cut into the dense jungle interior and sparsely populated coastal districts. The lack of resources, infrastructure, law enforcement personnel, and equipment makes detection and interdiction difficult.

Drugs are transported along interior roads to and from the clandestine airstrips. Drugs are also shipped to seaports via numerous river routes to the sea or overland for onward shipment to Caribbean islands, Europe, and the United States. Sea-drops are also used. Drugs exit Suriname via commercial air flights (by drug couriers or concealed in planes) and by commercial sea cargo. European-produced MDMA is transported via commercial airline flights from the Netherlands to Suriname (three to six flights per week, varying seasonally); in the past drug couriers have transported the drugs to the United States.

Domestic Programs. During 2006, the National Drug Demand Reduction Office (DDR) conducted numerous drug awareness and drug prevention campaigns. Schoolteachers and police officers were trained in early detection of drug use. The Suriname Epidemiological Network on Drug Use (SURENDU), which is a network of governmental and non-governmental organizations, was strengthened in the areas of drug-use prevention and treatment in 2006. With funding from the

PARAMARIBO 00000723 004.2 OF 004

Organization of American States, the National Anti-Drugs Council (NAR) embarked on a project to survey drug use in Suriname. Around 6,000 persons between the ages of 12 and 65 will be interviewed. The Council will also do a study on drug use in prisons. In the area of supply reduction, a U.S.-funded computer database was established to keep track of drug criminals from their detention up to their sentencing.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs

U.S. Policy Initiatives. The principle obstacles to effective counternarcotics law enforcement efforts in Suriname are inadequate resources and limited training for law enforcement. Therefore, the U.S. aims to strengthen the GOS law enforcement and judicial institutions and their capabilities to detect, interdict, and prosecute narco-trafficking activities through a mix of training and equipment and thereby help Suriname to effectively reduce narcotics trafficking.

Bilateral Cooperation. A high level of cooperation exists between U.S. and GOS law enforcement officials. In 2006, once again the U.S. provided both training and material support to several elements of the national police to strengthen their counternarcotics capabilities and promote greater bilateral cooperation. In July 2006, the DEA intensified its cooperation with Surinamese law

enforcement by establishing a soon-to-be three person office in Suriname. The U.S. was a participant and presenter at the October 2006 anti-narcotics conference in Paramaribo.

The Road Ahead. The U.S. will continue to encourage the GOS to pursue large narcotics traffickers and to dismantle their organizations; the GOS Ministry of Justice and Police has focused repeatedly on this goal in the news media, and the Khan arrest bears out its seriousness and commitment. The U.S. continues to urge the GOS to focus on port security, specifically seaports, which are seen as the primary conduits for large shipments of narcotics exiting Suriname. Port security did improve in 2006. The U.S. will continue to provide equipment, training, and technical support to the GOS to strengthen its counternarcotics efforts.

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